

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 342.THE NATION
16-23 August 1980

POLITICS AND PARANOIA

The Strange Odyssey of Lyndon LaRouche

FRANK DONNER and
RANDALL ROTHENBERG

We must put a member of the national elite directly into the White House, someone of personal stature at least on the level of the world leaders with whom that President must deal. We must now put me into the White House. . . . In reality, you have no other choice. Either I lead us out of this hideous mess, or this nation is about to go as Babylon went before it.

—Lyndon LaRouche, Chairman
United States Labor Party, June 17, 1980

In the late 1960s the United States Labor Party, also known as the National Caucus of Labor Committees, was a familiar presence on the left. Except for the premium it placed upon creating a nuisance, the U.S.L.P. appeared at the time little different from the many parties formed then that are no longer in existence. But the Labor Party we still have with us, albeit in different ideological clothes and with more sophisticated techniques of operation. What can account for its longevity, for its dramatic swing rightward, for its continued effectiveness in disrupting the political process?

Despite extensive investigative reports on the U.S.L.P. in *The New York Times* and in a New York City community shopper called *Our Town*, the real story of the group is probably to be found in the shadowy territory where a political party is transformed into a cult; and for fuller understanding of this new hybrid, the political cult, we must draw as much upon the findings of psychopathology as a knowledge of politics—that is, we must explore that uncharted terrain where the two meet and shape each other.

Lyndon LaRouche's yearlong quest for victory in the New Hampshire Democratic primary introduced New England to the paranoid style of U.S. Labor Party politics. Young followers of the party's founder began flooding the state in early 1979, trying to convince the citizenry that

LaRouche, the middle-aged, bespectacled "world-renowned economist," was the last hope left for America.

As the campaign heated up, so did LaRouche and his supporters, with new improvisations on some of their familiar mischief. The U.S.L.P. began attacking Republican George Bush for his membership in the Trilateral Commission, which LaRouche has always claimed is the core of an international conspiracy. The attacks were parroted by ultraconservative New Hampshire publisher William Loeb in *The Manchester Union Leader*. And here, in the conjunction of Loeb and LaRouche, we have in small the recent history of the U.S. Labor Party—its courtship of the ultraright and its effectiveness in drawing some of these rightist groups into the kind of disruptive manipulation of the political process that is the U.S. Labor Party's specialty. In this particular instance, the attacks on Bush had the double benefit, from the party's point of view, of attracting a good deal of publicity (the front page of *The Wall Street Journal*) and, by some accounts, damaging Bush's chances in the primary.

At one point, LaRouche ceased harassing his opponents long enough to engage in some of his own self-promotional brand of paranoia. He called a press conference to announce that he was the target of an assassination plot that involved not only "Zionist and British agents" but *The Concord Monitor*, *The Keene Sentinel* and *The Nashua Telegraph* as well. Under questioning, the self-described "counterintelligence expert" admitted that he had had his followers pose as newspaper reporters and Democratic Party operatives to ferret out information about the plot. "We can impersonate them all we want to, because they are doing it to us," said LaRouche. "These amateurs are not supposed to play games with people of my rank; otherwise, they get chewed up."

A "New Hampshire Target List" was discovered by Associated Press reporters in a room in the Concord Young Men's Christian Association. It contained the names of public officials—including the Governor, the Secretary of State and the Attorney General—who were to be the subjects of harassing telephone calls from the U.S. Labor Party in the two days left before the election. New Hampshire Attorney General Thomas Rath confirmed that he received fifty menacing calls on the Sunday prior to the primary.

The following Tuesday, February 26, after a year of hard politicking, LaRouche received 2,307 votes—less than 1 percent of the vote cast—in the New Hampshire primary. This is par for the course in U.S.L.P. campaigns, as is the cry of "vote fraud" that the candidate and his followers set up even before the ballots were counted. In a subsequent recount LaRouche gained nineteen additional votes.

The U.S. Labor Party is the political arm of the National Caucus of Labor Committees which, in the late 1960s, emerged as a Marxist offshoot of the splintered student left. In 1973, the National Caucus entered the political process through the U.S.L.P., which became its major operation and alter ego. LaRouchites are now downplaying the Labor

Frank Donner is director of the American Civil Liberties Union research project on political surveillance and author of a recent book on the subject, *The Age of Surveillance* (Alfred A. Knopf). Randall Rothenberg, a contributing editor of *New Jersey Monthly*, is co-author of *Getting Angry Six Times a Week: A Portfolio of Political Cartoons* (Beacon).